

## TERRY THIBODEAUX

**SUMMARY:** Terry Thibodeaux talks to Pat Jasper about his career as a Port Engineer with Martin Marine. He discusses the nuances of his job, the dangers involved and the work involved in building a ship.

00:15

Born in Port Arthur, TX. Graduated high school from Thomas Jefferson. Started in the Marine business in 1980 as a mechanic/helper. Worked there for 14 years. Whenever any tugboat broke down, would go out and fix it.

01:17

Father came to Port Arthur looking for work from Louisiana. Father was in the bread business. Not in the marine business. Sister married someone who was all in the marine business. Was offered a job through them. If a boat/engine was broken would load up in a truck, fix the boat and turn and come back home. (PHONE RINGS)

03:36

Instead of continuing with school, just continued work and learnt everything on the job. Troubleshoot problems, how to get along with everyone on the job and to make sure everything functions as a whole unit. Learn to fix everything - from a toilet to a broken heart. Mainly engines, steering, gearboxes, propellers. Timeframe involved too. Repairs as cheap as can be.

05:47

First 25 years was all hands on. Changed pistons, liners, everything on the boat that can be changed. When taking care of extra equipment, have to contract that out. When three or four boats are breaking down all over the area, have to hire people in that area to go fix it.

07:31

A lot of older engines that were kept running for as long as possible, A lot of technology has changed. Learnt to operate new equipment as and when it was being used. Learning the same time as the manufacturers are learning.

10:16

Always worked for corporations and hence worked on company's boats. "Marine business is real big but real small too." Cooperative spirit. People know one another. All work well together.

12:18

Even before one gets to work, the phone is constantly ringing. On call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Might end up having 5 boats with problems very early in the day. Might have air-conditioners on a boat stop working. If it is in New Orleans, find a vendor to fix it. Maybe a boat in Corpus Christi with steering trouble. Have to tell vendor what the problem is. Also have to figure out the problem when the call comes in. Boats are all the property of Martin Marine.

15:12

Responsible for the inland fleet. Stays in the inter-coastal everywhere. Offshore fleet, goes offshore and pushes bigger barges and get out in the Gulf. No problems with bad weather. Take care of the inter-coastal side. 20 boats on inter-coastal and 6 offshore units. Push boats and tugs. Push boats stay on the inter-coastal and the tugs go outside. Push boats push the barges. Offshore can either push or pull the big units.

18:39

Now there are people who are hired only to take care of safety. Make sure to keep everyone safe. Wear earplugs, safety glasses. All this is taught before they get on the boat. Lot of training.

20:03

Boats stop in a fleet and park equipment before heading out to the next refinery. Oils and clean products for Shell, Marathon, Exxon Mobil. Have to keep safety up to date. Spills - have to get people moving and hustling. Have to call all the right people. Few years ago, steering of a boat gave way, boat ran into the rocks, put a hole in the barge, had to try and contain the oil to one particular spot. Tried to clog the hole with a mattress. In the 90s. Worked with Port Arthur Towing.

25:35

There have been engines blowing up, throw a rod on the side and break the starter off. Go through a lot of different scenarios. Offshore boats - might need to call another boat to rescue the first one. Inland boats - can always see land from where ever the boat is. Martin Marine serves the entire US coast. From California to Florida and Louisiana to Mississippi and Ohio River. Inland boats do not go up to the east coast. Offshore boats can.

27:22

Responsible for all the inland boats. Martin Marines have some fueling docks, fleet of over 700 trucks, Martin even has refineries with tanks, have a lot more equipment other than marine related equipment. Not just marine but a lot of different equipment.

29:05

Marine industry has picked up tremendously compared to what it used to be. Waterways now look like an interstate highway as far as traffic and equipment on the waterfront.

29:41

Martine marine hired a shipyard to build some boats. Had a contract before it was built. It already had a job even before it was built. Industry is getting so big that it needs people to build stuff fast enough.

30:54

Port Engineer - needs to be present every day during the building of a ship. Lot of input on how it is built, where to put the fuel, oil tanks, how it should be loaded. Company may want particular safety issues to be included. Was port engineer for the Lance Corporal.

31:46

Sheet of steel to start off with. Start from the hull and then move on to engines and gears, have the houses built where the living quarters are located. Wheelhouse on the top. Whole time that is going on, work continues with the electricians, AC workmen and in short everything on it is being overseen.

33:06

Try to get the boat as comfortable as possible. Shipmen are out there so long, try to make the boat like home. Easy to get people if it is comfortable.

36:25

Work with the main foreman at the ship yard. He has welders, pipe workers and he coordinates them. Deals with the main foreman with concerns. Steel structure, in house appliances.

38:19

Special breed, hard on family life. Miss a lot of football games, christmases, new years, thanksgivings. SAFETY concerns regarding pilots. Family gets used to erratic hours. Some wives don't get used to it.

40:37

Safety concerns slow a lot of work.. Need to remember that it is for a good reason. Pressure from people.

41:43

Some shipmen don't retire because they don't want to leave the waterfront

43:40

Did not have formal training. Worked and learnt on the job. The person who went to college forms the team because he knows a different part of the job and work together as a team. Had a collision with one boat to a barge. Hit it too hard and punctured a hole in the barge, needed to get it fixed. Had to find out which machine failed so that his accident

took place. Had to let the engineer know which machine had failed. He knew how much water was going into a certain size hole and whether the equipment would still float.

47:00

PAUSES RECORDING

47:11

RESUMES RECORDING

Dangerous industry. Tanker man discharges and loads the barge and then takes care of the boat. evidently boat as coming up to the dock and just when it got to the dock, he was climbing over the step to the engine room and the boat bumped the dock, he fell overboard, No one knew he fell overboard. Propellers and gears sucked him underneath. Fleet was across the river. Propellers hit him, sucked him under, and pushed him under water right near the fleet of barges as couldn't find him for a few days until the fleet was moved.